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INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE
FOR THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS
DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION,
PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA
Tenth session
New York, 6-17 January 1997
Agenda item 2

REPORT ON THE WORK OF OTHER BODIES PERFORMING WORK SIMILAR TO THAT ENVISAGED FOR THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Note by the Secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph (c) of its decision 9/11, the INCD requested the Interim Secretariat to identify bodies of other relevant organizations and conventions performing work similar to the work envisaged to be undertaken by the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), and to report to the tenth session on such work and possible areas of cooperation with such bodies. The Secretariat accordingly corresponded with all easily identifiable bodies or organizations of potential interest and received positive responses from twenty-five of them. It also reviewed relevant available reference materials.

2. In preparing this report, the Secretariat divided "areas of cooperation" into two parts: substantive fields of potential cooperation and methods or means of cooperation. Part II of this report contains a general analysis of possible fields and means of cooperation consistently with relevant provisions of the Convention, as well as the terms of reference of the CST and its draft proposed programme of work in document A/AC.241/66. Part III then identifies bodies and organization with which the CST could cooperate and indicates substantive fields of cooperation with them. The Annex provides comparable profiles of the principal scientific and technical committees or panels of these organizations which would be the counterparts of the CST.

II. AREAS OF COOPERATION

A. Convention provisions

3. Article 8 of the Convention encourages coordination of activities carried out under the Convention and other relevant international agreements, particularly the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, in order to derive maximum benefit from activities under each agreement while avoiding duplication of efforts.This article then points to some specific areas of cooperation, namely, joint programmes, particularly in the fields of research,training,systematic observation and information collection and exchange.

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4. In various other contexts, the Convention also refers to scientific and technical cooperation among the Parties in such fields as joint research programmes, information collection and dissemination, technology transfer, protection and utilization of traditional and local technology, the conservation of land and water resources and the sustainable management of transboundary natural resources. These are all fields where cooperation with other conventions and organizations could be fruitful for the Parties. In this connection, paragraph 10 of the proposed CST terms of reference, as contained in INCD decision 9/10, authorizes the CST to seek the cooperation of, and utilize the services of and information provided by, competent bodies or agencies, whether national or international, intergovernmental or non-governmental. Under paragraph 2(c)(iii), the CST functions also include recommendations for promoting cooperative and comparative research between regions with different cultural and socio-economic circumstances.

5. The draft proposed programme of work for the CST suggests that the CST initially accords priority to the networking of institutions, agencies and bodies, in accordance with article 25 of the Convention; benchmarks and indicators; inventories of traditional and local technology, knowledge, know-how and practices; and the establishment of research priorities. These or other priority fields decided would be a logical focus for specific and practical initial cooperative efforts with other bodies and organizations, experience with which would shape long-term links and guide future cooperative activities. The proposed work programme also suggests that the CST discuss at its first session the establishment of appropriate links with relevant bodies and organizations. In fact, the topic of cooperation could well become a sanding item on the CST agenda.

B. Methods of cooperation

6. Coordination and cooperation among bodies and organizations allows the exercise of competence on the basis of comparative advantage of institutions. It also could enhance coordination of action programmes at all levels. Scientific and technical cooperation has already demonstrated significant positive potential in advancing the substantive agenda of international agreements of the Convention's type. To achieve such a potential, the CST could pursue under the policy guidance of the Conference of the Parties (COP), some of the following major methods of cooperation

(a) *Reciprocal participation in meetings.* In accordance with article 22, paragraph 7 of the Convention, observers from other bodies and organizations may, with the concurrence of the COP, be invited to CST sessions. Some might also be asked to present brief reports on their activities of interest. The CST could be similarly represented at sessions of counterpart scientific bodies by its Chairman, the head of the Permanent Secretariat or some other person the CST designates.

(b) *Exchange of information and networking.* Related conventions and organizations operate or participate in a wide variety of information exchange mechanisms, including networks, clearing houses, publications, databases and meetings. There is considerable scope for harmonizing such mechanisms with similar ones in the Convention's context. This would not only provide information useful to the Convention's implementation but would also avoid duplication of effort and reduce costs.

(c) *Harmonization of national programmes and reporting requirements.* There is growing concern about the proliferation and overlap of plans, programmes and reports required under environmental conventions, which strain the limited resources of developing countries. This points to the advantage of the CST encouraging and facilitating the harmonization of the scientific and technical aspects of related plans and programmes, as well as coordination of relevant reports among the national focal points of various conventions. There are already memoranda of understanding on these subjects among conventions concerned with biological diversity.

(d) *Jointly convened seminars/workshops and coordination meetings.* Under the guidance of the CST, the Permanent Secretariat could join the secretariats of related conventions and organizations in facilitating seminars and workshops on subjects of common interest, for example, the conservation and utilization of dryland biodiversity. The CST may also consider inviting observers from relevant conventions and institutions to present reports to the CST on their relevant activities. Conversely, the CST may wish to draw to the attention of those conventions and institutions decisions of the COP which are of particular relevance to their area of responsibility.

(e) *Cross-fertilization of rosters of experts.* As noted in the Annex, the scientific bodies of a number of related conventions and organizations maintain rosters of experts to assist them in their work. It would be useful to exchange and disseminate to Parties information on these rosters and, possibly, to integrate them in a common data base.

7. The Secretariat has already been working with some of the bodies and organizations identified below on matters of common scientific and technical interest. In particular, some of them participated in the work of the International Panel of Experts on Desertification that the General Assembly resolution 47/188 established to advise the Secretariat and the INCD during the negotiation process of the Convention. The Secretariat also, for example, has regularly attended meetings of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), has provided inputs to the work of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) related to land degradation, has worked with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Sahara/Sahel Observatory (OSS) on information exchange related to land degradation issues in Africa and has cooperated with a number of organizations to carry out INCD mandates on benchmarks and indicators. Moreover, the Secretariat participates in coordination meetings of environmental conventions, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

III. BODIES IDENTIFIED FOR COOPERATION PURPOSES

8. Numerous organizations and institutions, in both the public and the private sector, are carrying out scientific and technical work related to desertification. Many of the major ones corresponded with the Secretariat to show interest in cooperating with the CST and to describe their scientific activities. The following sections briefly identify the organizations concerned and indicate substantive fields of potential cooperation with the CST.

A. Scientific committees and panels

9. Most environmental conventions and several organizations have scientific committees and panels comparable in some ways to the CST. They would be among the CST's principal counterparts. The annex contains profiles of these bodies in a common format.

B. International organizations

10. International organizations working on desertification issues, including United Nations agencies and programmes, are playing an active role in the INCD process. These organizations can continue to be major partners in the CST's work programme. The interim secretariat received from such organizations the following information on substantive fields of possible cooperation over the long-term:

(a) *Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)*: networking of agencies, bodies and institutions in the context of ESCAP's role as the secretariat of the Regional Network of Research and Training Centres on Desertification Control in Asia and the Pacific (DESCONAP).

11. (b) *Food and Agricultural Organization(FAO)*: collection, processing and interpretation of meteorological satellite and weather data in Africa; establishment of norms for monitoring land cover and land use changes; and enhanced use of fodder trees.

(c) *International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)*: comparability of research activities under ICRISAT's Desert Margin Initiative (DMI) with action programmes under the Convention; evaluation of traditional and local, soil, water, nutrient, vegetation and livestock management practices; identification of socio-economic constraints to improve management practices; development of improved and integrated management technologies to achieve greater productivity of crops, trees and animals; and facilitation of desertification networking of agencies and bodies.

(d) *International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)*: research and collaborative research networks for resource poor farmers; promotion of demand-driven technology development and diffusion systems; and establishment of participatory systems for monitoring community-based resource management, as well as small-scale soil and water management.

(e) *International Panel on Forests (IPF)*: monitoring of actions to support dryland afforestation, reforestation and restoration of forest ecosystems in the context of possible follow up to the IPF mandate due to end on 1997.

(f) *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)*: Club du Sahel participation in information exchange among African regional and subregional organizations, as well as in working groups on indicators, impact evaluation and financial aspects; and development, in Africa, of integrated information systems by using new information technologies (in collaboration with OSS and UNITAR).

(g) *Sahara/Sahel Observatory (OSS)*: development of integrated information systems and use of new information technologies in Africa; and networking of the Convention's national and subregional focal points in Africa.

(h) *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)*: technological capacity building innovation and technology flows for integrated dryland management, particularly in the context of UNCTAD's role as the secretariat of both the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Commission for Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).

(i) *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*: indicator development, including indicators of the implementation process of the Convention's programmes; indicator development, including methods of assessing the desertification status at the national level; promotion of farmer innovations in water management in the drylands; development of new techniques for drought preparedness and mitigation; understanding of drylands' contribution to national economies as well as linkages between urban development and desertification; and networking between concerned actors.

(j) *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*: benchmarks and indicators; and scientific and technical aspects of portions related to desertification in UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and International Hydrological Programme (IHP).

(k) *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)*: development of desertification assessment methodologies and land-quality indicators; amalgamation of modern and traditional scientific knowledge for sustainable use of dryland resources; networks for exchanging information; assessment of climate change impacts and responses in drylands; and diagnostic studies and research on transboundary water bodies.

(l) *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*: energy supply and energy saving measures in refugee camps in desertified areas.

(m) *United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)*:training programmes at the local level on the scientific and technical aspects of the Convention; development, in Africa, of integrated information systems by using new information technologies; and networking of the Convention's national focal points and subregional organizations in Africa.

(n) *World Health Organization (WHO)*: health ramifications of desertification and drought, particularly, as they relate to migration and water quality in desertified or dryland areas.

C. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

12. A number of the NGOs carry out scientific and technical activities. It was not possible to correspond with many of them but several provided the information below on substantive fields of interface between their activities and the work of the CST.

(a) *International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU)*: research on dryland agricultural systems and land management practices.

(b) *International Society of Soil Science (ISSS)*: research, information exchange and indicators on dryland soils in the context of work of the ISSS Commission on Soils and the Environment.

(c) *World Conservation Union (IUCN)*: research and information exchange related to conservation and utilization of dryland biodiversity, including in the context of work of IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management.

(d) *World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)*: information exchange on dryland forests and wetlands in deserts or dryland areas or areas threatened by desertification.

ANNEX

PROFILES OF RELEVANT SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL BODIES

FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

NAME OF BODIES/ACRONYM:	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA); Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI)
PARENT ORGANIZATION:	Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC)
LEGAL AUTHORITY:	FCCC, Article 9 (SBSTA) and 10 (SBI); COPI, Decision 6/CP.1
PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS:	SBSTA: (a) provides liaison between scientific assessments and policy needs of the FCCC; (b) provides advice on policy implications of knowledge on climate change and its effects, by reviewing implications of scientific, technical and socio-economic information; (c) prepares guidelines for national communications, and for reporting on activities implemented jointly, including on methodological issues; (d) identifies relevant technologies, and advises on promoting their development and/or transfer; (e) advises on scientific programmes, on international cooperation in relevant research and on support for capacity building in developing countries SBI: considers information based on, inter alia, national communications to assess the implementation of commitments and the effect of steps taken by the Parties to reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere
POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE AREAS OF COOPERATION WITH CST:	Stabilization, within an appropriate time frame, of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere that would represent dangerous anthropogenic interference, including emissions from desertification activities; development of indicators of climate change and their significance for desertification, and vice-versa; cooperation in areas of technology development, deployment and transfer; cooperation and programmes in areas of scientific research and systematic observation
ROSTER OF EXPERTS:	Yes

CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

NAME OF BODY/ACRONYM:	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)
PARENT ORGANIZATION:	Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
LEGAL AUTHORITY:	CBD, Article 25 and relevant decisions of the COP, in particular, decision II-1*
PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS:	Provides scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity and effects of types of measures taken under the CBD; identifies relevant innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how; provides advice on relevant scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity
POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE AREAS OF COOPERATION WITH CST:	Conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity in drylands; fair and equitable sharing of the benefits resulting from the utilization of dryland genetic resources; development of indicators of biological diversity and their significance for desertification, and vice-versa; cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the drylands
ROSTER OF EXPERTS:	Yes (only for marine and coastal resources)

* At the time of preparing this table additional decisions were expected from COP III, held on 4 - 15 November 1996 in Buenos Aires

GLOBAL AND ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

NAME OF BODY/ACRONYM:	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)
PARENT ORGANIZATION:	Council of Global Environmental Facility (GEF)
LEGAL AUTHORITY:	Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF
PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS:	Provides objective, strategic scientific and technical advice on GEF policies, operational strategies and programmes; conducts selective reviews of projects in certain circumstances; interacts in a complementary manner with relevant scientific and technical bodies including potentially with the CST of the Convention to Combat Desertification; advises on the development of scientific and technical criteria, as well as on scientific and technical advice regarding priorities for GEF funding
POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE AREAS OF COOPERATION WITH CST:	Interrelations of desertification and drought issues with those of climate change, biological diversity and international waters; choice of indicators to measure project impact in these focal areas as they relate to desertification.
ROSTER OF EXPERTS:	Yes

INTERNATIONAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

NAME OF BODY/ACRONYM:	International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
PARENT ORGANIZATIONS:	World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
LEGAL AUTHORITY:	WMO Executive Council and UNEP Governing Council resolutions and decisions
PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS:	Assesses on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis, scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the risk of human induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation
POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE AREAS OF COOPERATION WITH CST:	Interrelation of drought and desertification with greenhouse gas emissions and sinks, as well as mitigation of climate change and adaptation to it
ROSTER OF EXPERTS:	Yes

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

NAME OF BODY/ACRONYM:	Hydrology Commission (CHy), Agricultural Meteorology Commission (CAgM), Climatology Commission (CCL)
PARENT ORGANIZATION:	World Meteorological Congress
LEGAL AUTHORITY:	World Meteorological Convention
PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS:	CHy does studies on water balance, hydrology assessments, global hydrological cycle and hydrological forecasting; CAgM develops agrometeorological services, including meteorological aspects of desertification and drought; CCL studies climate and its effect on human activities and application of meteorological information for sustainable development
POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE AREAS OF COOPERATION WITH CST:	Studies of water balance; assessments of the global hydrological cycle and hydrological forecasting; development of agrometeorological services; drought preparedness and management including contingency plans; use of agrometeorological data in food security systems; capacity building for assessment and systematic observation of meteorological data; promotion of use of meteorological data and information for preventive measures to avoid land degradation; transfer of knowledge and technology via training on drought management and desertification; research and development on causes and effects of drought and desertification
ROSTER OF EXPERTS:	Yes

RAMSAR CONVENTION

NAME OF BODY/ACRONYM:	Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)
PARENT ORGANIZATION:	Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Convention on Wetlands, Ramsar Convention)
LEGAL AUTHORITY:	Ramsar Convention; COP5, Resolution C.5.5 and COP6, Resolution VI.7
PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS:	Provides scientific and technical assistance to the Bureau and Standing Committee and, through them, to the COP (Tasks are entrusted on an annual basis and include: identification of priorities for the application of monitoring procedures and evaluation of the application of guidelines for the implementation of the "wise use" concept; evaluation of the application of the "Guidelines on management planning for Ramsar sites"; definition of ecological character and guidelines on monitoring change in it)
POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE AREAS OF COOPERATION WITH CST:	Wetlands in drylands management planning taking into account Ramsar Strategic Plan for 1997-2002
ROSTER OF EXPERTS:	Yes

BONN CONVENTION

NAME OF BODY/ACRONYM:	Scientific Council
PARENT ORGANIZATION:	Conference of the Parties (COP) of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention, "CMS")
LEGAL AUTHORITY:	Bonn Convention, Article VIII, COP IV, Resolution 4.5
PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS:	Provides overall advice on scientific matters to COP and joint agreed activities
POTENTIAL SUBSTANTIVE AREAS OF COOPERATION WITH THE CST:	Specific conservation and management measures for migratory species in dryland areas through eg. an agreement on Sahel-Saharan ungulates; selection and monitoring of small scale pilot projects to promote implementation in areas of interest to both CMS and the Convention; coordination of research on migratory species to ascertain the conservation status of migratory species in drylands
ROSTER OF EXPERTS:	The COP appoints experts to meetings of the Scientific Council